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COUNSELING PRACTICES.

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THE NEED FOR COUNSELING IS EMPHASIZED BY THE FACT THAT 875,000 CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL IMPEDIMENTS TO LEARNING. TYPICAL COUNSELING PRACTICES ARE PROBLEM-CENTERED COUNSELING, EXCLUSIVELY "VOCATIONAL" OR "EDUCATIONAL" COUNSELING WITH LITTLE CONCERN FOR THE WHOLE INDIVIDUAL, EXTREME DIRECTIVE OR NONDIRECTIVE COUNSELING, THE "CLINICAL" APPROACH WHICH ASSUMES THAT EVERYONE HAS A DEVIANT PROBLEM, ECLECTIC COUNSELING, INFORMATION GIVING, AND "THE PAL" WHO TRIES TO BE EVERYTHING TO THE CHILD. AN IMMEDIATE COUNSELING GOAL IS TO ENABLE THE CHILD TO EXPRESS HIMSELF. A LONG RANGE GOAL IS TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT. BACKGROUND INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT. A BASIC COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUE INVOLVES "LISTENING" FOR NONVERBAL AS WELL AS VERBAL CLUES. THE COUNSELOR OCCASIONALLY MUST INTERVENE IN THE LIFE PROCESS OF THE CHILD TO INTERRUPT SELF-DECEIVING BEHAVIOR PATTERNS. THE COUNSELOR SHOULD SHOW ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHILD, AND MOVE FROM WITHIN THE CHILD'S FRAME OF REFERENCE. HE SHOULD ALSO RECOGNIZE THE LIMITS OF THE COUNSELING PROCESS AND MAKE REFERRALS WHEN NECESSARY. THE ULTIMATE TEST OF COUNSELING UPON WHICH EVALUATION CRITERIA SHOULD BE BASED IS WHETHER THE PERSON IS MOVING TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE AND ACCEPTANCE OF HIMSELF. THE AUTHOR FEELS THAT COUNSELORS RESIST CHANGE, AND SHOULD DEVELOP A COUNSELING THEORY, COUNSELING GOALS, AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES. THIS IS ONE OF THE REPORTS FROM THE ZION CONFERENCE AND THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DEMONSTRATION CENTERS INCLUDED IN "ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE IN ILLINOIS." (FS)

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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE IN ILLINOIS

Reports from the Zion Conference and
The Elementary School Demonstration Centers

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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COUNSELING PRACTICES

Glenn Waterloo *

Doctor Waterloo briefly discusses the various counseling orientations, objectives and goals, the importance of "attentive counseling", counselor values, and evaluation of behavior change as a result of individual counseling.

Why should we counsel? Why is counseling necessary for children today? There are a few statistics pertinent to these questions.

First, today, over thirty-one percent of the mothers with children under eighteen are working outside of the home. Almost half of this number have children under six. So there is a substantial portion of parents who are not at home for preschool children. Secondly, in households with children under eighteen, over two and a half million of these are broken families. They are broken by death, separation, or divorce. In the general school population of the United States for 1963-64, eight hundred and seventy-five thousand children had been found to have either mental or physical impediments to their learning process. These facts, plus the demands placed on education by society, have led to the development of counseling and guidance.

The concept of counseling is a process whereby a mature, competent, well-prepared individual, through a process of interviewing in a private setting, works with another individual to help that individual resolve his problems.

BASIC INTERVIEW APPROACHES

What are some of the typical counseling practices? I have divided these into several categories. We have, what I would call, "first aid" counseling. Here we find counselors who are running from crisis to crisis. They are never really concerned about the future; they are concerned about the present only. How to immediately delay some particular problem, and to prove to themselves that they have solved something, or to satisfy administrators or teachers that they are actually doing something.

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Then, there are those who concern themselves exclusively with "vocational" or "educational" counseling. They are not concerned with the person as a person. All they are worried about is whether or not the child is getting the kind of education (i.e., subject matter) that they think the child should be getting, and whether or not he is getting some concept of the world of work.

Then there is the extreme, the "nondirective" counselor who doesn't say or do anything except sit, nodding his head. I'm not maligning Roger's theory by any means; however, I'm talking about the extremist.

Next there is the extreme "directive" counselor, whose usual procedure is to say to the students, "all right, now I'll tell you what you are going to do", and this constitutes the counseling session.

Then, there is the person who is overwhelmed with, what I call, the "clinical" approach. This person's theory is that everybody has to have a deviant problem. It is his sole mission in life to define this problem. I remember in one secondary school a young boy who seemed to be well adjusted. He was popular with the student body, popular with the faculty, and he was doing good work in school. I was asking him about the counseling program. He said, "Well, it's fine sir, excepting for one thing. The counselor insists that I have a deep troubling problem. You know I really don't have one, but I'm getting one. The counselor is the problem."

Then, there is what I call, for want of a better term, the "eclectic" counselor. This is the one who uses all the approaches as he feels they adapt to a particular situation. There are times when he assists the student; he gives him information and tries to set the tone of the counseling session, as is needed by that student at that time.

Of course, there is always with us the "information giver". All he does is pass out information to students. Burying them in bulletins, booklets, and pamphlets, and

providing big displays on the wall. When a student comes in for any type of discussion, there has to be a booklet to hand to the student so that the counselor may say, "Here, this will take care of your problems. This will answer your questions."

Finally, there is, what I think is to my own mind, one of the blots on counseling, the "pal". He is going to be the father, mother, clergyman, doctor, lawyer, defense attorney, and everything possible to this child. "Everyone is wrong and is picking on you, and I'm your only friend. All the faculty are against you, I understand this, the administration is being harsh with you, I'm your friend, you come to me and I'll be your defense attorney." Now, those are what I believe to comprise counseling practices in our schools, elementary and secondary.

COUNSELING BASIC GOALS

There are two particular goals we should consider in the counseling process itself - the immediate goal and the long-range goal. The immediate goal is for the child to give revelation to his feelings so that the child can express himself; say whatever it is that the child needs to say and feel.

The long-range goal is to develop the child through the counseling process and all the other activities in guidance so that he no longer really needs the counseling.

The first thing is to know the student as well as you can by reviewing his record. Find out what the student's abilities are; his achievements; anecdotal pieces of information; his health and his family situation; so that when you do talk to the child, you have a pretty fair concept of some of his background.

Secondly, there is nothing more shattering, particularly to an elementary child, when he goes in to see a counselor who states to the child, "Well, you're in trouble again!" You know what the direction of an interview would be from that point on. The child is defensive.

Another point is that you should listen to the counselee. Many times we hear the words they are saying but do we really listen to what they are saying? Pay attention to many clues, such as, their tone of voice. For example, if the child being interviewed frequently refers to one of his parents, "Oh, yes, my Father". If we listen to this, we are not just hearing the name of one of their parents, we are listening to something that this child is trying to tell us, an indication of some feeling.

You must realize too, the counselor's duty in the counseling session is to interrupt self-deceiving behavior patterns. Many children are very insecure in what they are truly capable of doing. This insecurity may prevent them from being able to play ball with the other boys, or being able to skip rope with the other girls, or, perhaps, cause them to be the last one to be chosen for games. The counselor should intervene, to some extent, in the life progress of the individual. Intervening in this life progress means that you are helping the person to adopt attitudes that are good for this particular person.

There is nothing that says that children have to be successful in everything. I think that part of our job in the counseling session is to get the child to understand that there are some things that they will do poorly and there are other things that they will do well, and to accept this fact. The counselor also has to accept the child for what he is.

Now, I know that this is pretty difficult, because there are many times when children have been taught values at home that are different from values of the middle class society, from which most of us have come. If we react unfavorably when a child says, "I don't see anything wrong with taking a pencil from another child who has two pencils and I didn't have any". Well, many of us would react, "This is stealing". But to this child perhaps it is acceptable in his frame of reference and we must accept this fact and move from this point with this particular child.

BASIC LIMITATIONS

We cannot sit in judgment in the counseling session with a child. One must know his limits as a counselor. We should know what our training is and what we are prepared to cope with as far as a student is concerned. We are not psychiatrists and we should admit this to ourselves. When there is a need for referral, and we understand and recognize the fact that we are making no progress beyond a particular point with the child, we should refer this child to someone else. Unfortunately, there are many counselors who will not let go, so to speak. When we talk to parents, through parent meetings and individually, we frequently say to a parent, "You have to let go of your children. They need to grow up! They must develop their own personalities and they are not always going to identify closely with the parent".

Do we, as counselors, practice the same thing, or do we insist that we can handle any problem the child presents? If the child needs speech assistance, we should be willing to turn them over to a speech correctionist. If this child needs remedial reading, we should then make it a point to find out where this is available and secure it for the child. If this child shows tendencies toward a serious neurosis, we should be willing to notify his parents and to refer this child to a psychologist or a psychiatrist. But for us to try to be all things to all children is detrimental to the child as well as to our profession.

EVALUATION IS ESSENTIAL

How do we evaluate counseling? Briefly, I think that there are some things of which we need to be cognizant. First, we should look to see whether or not there have been behavioral changes. Second, has the child begun to develop self-understanding? Is the child more successful in his undertakings because he has learned to choose the most appropriate alternative? Does the child have better relationships with his age group and authority groups? Do they accept the fact that there is authority, that it is just, and do

they move with society in this respect? Has the child developed a desire to achieve an accessible and obtainable goal for himself? The ultimate test of counseling, in many respects, is that the person moves from waiting and watching to self-reliance and acceptance of himself as a person. In many respects, we will not know what the results of our counseling sessions have been, for the simple reason that the results may not materialize for some period of time.

Many times in the elementary and secondary schools there is a demand for tangible results. As far as the counseling of a child is concerned, it is well to recognize that some children cannot verbalize well. Then, we must use means other than strict verbalization. It has been stated that counseling on a one-to-one basis or in small groups is inefficient and uneconomical at the elementary level; however, others disagree. So we should not adopt the attitude that it cannot be done. We should adopt the attitude of how we are going to do it. Then, the process of counseling the elementary child is a matter of wanting to do it, being ready to do it, and adapting to change.

COUNSELORS RESIST CHANGE

Since members of our particular profession are conservative, we are basically opposed to change. We talk about it, we write about it in the journals, but in the actual school setting, how difficult is it to initiate change? It is extremely difficult. As a result, we have to, literally, force ourselves into an attitude that if something is not successful, we do not abandon the idea, rather, we seek other means. We are willing to listen to other people and their particular ideas.

These are the things that should be considered in the elementary school counseling. We have to work on the theory of it, we have to work on basic goals, we have to achieve, and we should decide these things for ourselves, and not have other

people decide them for us. We have to be ready to evaluate ourselves honestly and objectively. We should intelligently ask ourselves what are we doing to evaluate our services, and work on this matter of the individual counseling session; to accept the child, to realize that we have to work with a human being, and that we cannot hold this person forever.